



Let's have a conversation about



ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY

and beyond

PEOPLE WHO ARE PREGNANT, TRYING TO GET PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING

are encouraged to not drink alcohol for the health of their baby. But not drinking is sometimes harder than just deciding to quit, and quitting. And when you hear stories about how “my mother drank and I’m fine” and “so and so says a glass of wine is okay” it only gets more confusing. **While nothing beats an open, honest conversation with your healthcare professional, here are some answers to your most common questions, both to give you the truth about cannabis use and pregnancy risks and to inform that next conversation with your provider.**

IS ANY AMOUNT SAFE?

There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy—no matter what your aunt or friend or anyone says. And a child is developing throughout pregnancy, so any alcohol use—even later in a pregnancy—can cause problems.

HOW CAN IT AFFECT MY BABY?

Drinking during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, stillbirth and lifelong physical, behavioral, or intellectual issues. Among them are difficulty in learning and attention span, hyperactivity, low IQ, speech difficulties, and poor reasoning skills. One of the most serious disorders is called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). A baby born with FASD will have a small head, low weight and distinctive facial features.

I DRANK BEFORE I KNEW I WAS PREGNANT. IS THAT A PROBLEM?

If you drank alcohol in the first month of your pregnancy, it is unlikely any harm was done. It’s important to note that the next few weeks (weeks 3-8) are the most sensitive to causing birth defects. If you did drink before you knew, it’s best to let your healthcare professional know.

WHAT IF I HAVE A DRINK?

The best thing you can do if you do drink is talk about it. Understanding why you drank and finding alternatives can go a long way to being sure it’s a one-time mistake. The more you drink, the greater the risks of doing harm so being honest about the slip up and avoiding another one is the best way to avoid issues.

IF I DRINK WINE AND NOT LIQUOR IS IT OKAY?

Alcohol is alcohol. It’s the same chemical with the same negative effects no matter what form it’s in. One glass of wine is no different than one cocktail or one beer. And none of them are good for a healthy pregnancy.

ARE THERE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR SELF CARE?

If you drink when you know you shouldn’t, alcohol may be a bigger problem than you know. Programs like Alcoholics Anonymous can help you develop the support you need to stop. [VTHelpLink.org](https://vthelpink.org) has other treatment options. But your greatest asset is your healthcare professional who can help find a care method that works for you.

HOW ABOUT BREASTFEEDING?

Drinking alcohol can make it more difficult for your body to produce breast milk. Alcohol passes very easily into breast milk, and roughly the same level of alcohol in your blood is present in breast milk. Studies have shown drinking alcohol while breastfeeding can lead to a baby eating less, changes in sleep patterns and problems with motor development.

HOW LONG IS ALCOHOL IN MY BREAST MILK?

It takes between 2 and 2 1/2 hours for a standard drink to clear breast milk and an additional 2-2 1/2 hours for each additional drink. And nothing—not pumping and dumping, not drinking water, not drinking caffeine—can hurry this process.

WHERE CAN I FIND HELP?

Call 2-1-1, visit [VTHelpLink.org](https://vthelpink.org) or 802.565.LINK (5465) or talk to your healthcare professional.

For more information, there’s no better resource than your healthcare professional. Remember, they’re not there to judge. They’re there to help you have the healthiest pregnancy possible. Keep the conversation going.